

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
JUNE 10, 2014 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

Acting Chairman Pritchard called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Pritchard, Kane, Munn, Steinfeld
Alternate members present: Fitzgerald, Zod, Tarbox
Absent: Sherrard
Staff present: Glemboski, Silsby

Acting Chairman Pritchard appointed Fitzgerald to sit for Sherrard and Steinfeld to sit as Acting Secretary. Pritchard welcomed new alternate member Barbara Tarbox.

II. APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING MINUTES May 27, 2014 – No action taken.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Fitzgerald summarized a news article about the use of Noank School for a Community Garden and expressed his concerns. Pritchard noted this should be discussed under the corresponding item on tonight's agenda.

Staff gave an update on the Crystal Lake Road reconstruction project. A public meeting has been scheduled for 6/18/2014. It was noted that the Town Council has scheduled a site walk on Crystal Lake Road.

IV. SITE PLANS

1. LBI Commercial Park, 973 North Road (SIT11-03) – Request for Start of Construction Extension

Staff stated that the site plan was approved on 6/14/2011 and that site plan approval is valid until 6/14/2016. The applicant has requested a 1-year start of construction extension until 6/14/2015.

MOTION: To approve a Start of Construction extension until 6/14/2015.

Motion made by Fitzgerald, seconded by Steinfeld, so voted unanimously

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Subdivision Regulation Amendments – No action.
2. Plan of Conservation and Development Update – Steering Committee

Staff stated that the last POCD Steering Committee held their last meeting on 5/22/2014. She noted that comments have been gathered by the Planning Department and the consultants, and the draft POCD should be distributed at the next PC meeting.

3. Plan of Conservation and Development Update – Discussion of Planning Commission Review Process and Meeting Schedule

Staff distributed a proposed workshop schedule. The process was discussed and will be determined at the next PC meeting.

4. Town Council referral under CGS 8-24 regarding the proposed lease with Noank School public gardens for use of the Noank School Property

Staff distributed two motions for consideration. She stated that comments received from Pritchard have been incorporated into the motion to recommend not approving. She noted that a decision should be made tonight.

Pritchard stated that based on comments made at the last meeting, it was the consensus of the Commission not to recommend approval of the lease.

Inquiries were made about certain aspects of the motion regarding the location not central to the town, traffic, open space designation, specifying weekends and weekdays, recognizing the importance of a community garden, length of the lease, assessed value, costs to demolish the building and remove the oil tank, and maintenance.

Suggestions were made and discussed about adding additional language to the motion.

Fitzgerald expressed concerns and would like to know why the Town Council directed the Town Manager to draw up a lease prior to the referral to the Planning Commission.

Steinford noted his involvement with the Noank School Re-use Task Force. He referred to recent changes to Noank Zoning and believes that Noank Zoning should be factored into this use.

The Commission agreed that a negative report should be sent to the Town Council with the modified justification and rational for recommending not approving the lease.

The Commission also agreed the comments on operational issues should be added as a note of concern and not part of justification.

MOTION: The Planning Commission recommends that the Town Council not approve a lease of the Noank Elementary School Property for a community garden use, based on the below justification and rational.

Justification and Rational for Recommending Not Approving the Lease:

1. The Planning Commission recognizes the benefit of a community garden but this site is not centrally located for a town wide community garden or memorial, nor is it located on a main thoroughfare. For example, assignment of an area in the Copp property or the Fitch Middle School property, would be more appropriate for a town community garden.
2. The 2002 POCD designates the surrounding area as medium density residential. The use of the site for a community garden would increase the intensity of land use and would be disruptive to neighboring properties, due to increased seasonal traffic and onsite activity.

3. The use as a community garden does not optimize the currently assessed value of this land.
4. The site could support a significant number of individual garden sites, which would generate significant traffic on weekends and evenings on narrow residential streets and require a large parking area.
5. Selection of town residents for plot assignment would be better served by the Town Parks and Recreation Department, to prevent mishandling by a small independent organization that has no proven track record.

Additional Notes:

The Planning Commission also notes the following operational issues are not currently specified in the garden proposal.

- a. Designation of a Town entity that has oversight over the subject operation
- b. Responsibility for maintenance of the property to prevent loss of value to this property and to neighboring properties
- c. Hours that plot access is permitted
- d. Limits for use of power equipment
- e. Fees charged for plot use and associated costs
- f. Off season maintenance of the property
- g. Time limit for lease

Motion made by Pritchard, seconded by Steinfeld, so voted unanimously.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Zoning Board of Appeals Referral for June 11, 2014 Public Hearing
 - a. ZBA14-02 – Maxson Residence, 212 Cedar Road

Staff reviewed the variance request. The Planning Commission reviewed the proposal and plans were reviewed.

The Planning Commission had no comment.

- b. ZBA14-03 – Whealton Residence, 34 Ann Avenue

Staff reviewed the variance request. The Planning Commission reviewed the proposal and plans were reviewed.

The Planning Commission had no comment.

2. Zoning Commission Referral for July 2, 2014 Public Hearing
 - a. REGA14-01 – Sections 5.1-3 and 7.1-47 (Keeping of Hens)

Staff explained that this referral was requested by Zoning Officer Kevin Quinn. She stated that the Zoning Commission has been involved in the proposed language change. The Ledge Light Health District has also submitted comments. She added that a Certificate of Zoning Compliance will be required.

The Planning Commission had no comment.

3. New Applications – None.

VII. REPORT OF CHAIRMAN

Fitzgerald referred to a news article about a new air conditioning system being installed at Fairview, which is being paid for with state money.

VIII. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff received a brochure from the National Association of Realtors in regards to Smart Growth and the environment. Copies are available if interested.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:27 p.m. was made by Steinfeld, seconded by Munn, so voted unanimously.

Margil Steinfeld, Acting Secretary
Planning Commission

Prepared by Robin Silsby
Office Assistant II